FIELD BORDER (FEET)

CODE 386

MONTANA TECHNICAL GUIDE **SECTION IV**

DEFINITION

A strip of perennial vegetation established on the edge of field.

PURPOSE

To control erosion, protect edges of fields that are used as "turnrows" or travel lanes for farm machinery, provide wildlife food and cover, or improve the landscape.

Field borders can be used to:

- **provide access to the field.**
- **connect grassed waterways, filter strips, and other vegetative practices for ease of maintenance or harvest.**
- **develop setbacks from sensitive areas when applying pesticides or fertilizers.**
- **serve as turn and travel areas for equipment.**
- **provide loafing area for livestock and/or enhance wildlife habitat.**
- **enhance wildlife habitat.**
- **assist with wind or water erosion control, by trapping soil and organic sediment.**
- **serve as a buffer for beneficial insects or trap area for pests.**
- **provide additional forage.**
- **provide setbacks areas from utility right-of-way.**

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied at field edges on cropland, or to connect other vegetative buffer practices such as grassed waterways, filter strips, or contour buffers.

CRITERIA

Field borders must be a minimum of 20-feet wide. Design width must accommodate turning of farm equipment.

Design vegetation must meet the functional objectives of the landuser.

Selected vegetation must be adapted to soil and climatic conditions of the sight. Vegetative selection must be able to tolerate equipment traffic and soil compaction. See the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 512–Pasture and Hayland Planting, TABLE 4, for adapted species.

Selected vegetation must be stiff stemmed and upright to retard water flows and entrap contaminants including erosion induced sediments.

Follow the FOTG, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 512–Pasture and Hayland Planting for proper seedbed preparation, fertilization, seeding criteria, and seeding rates.

NOTE: This type of font **(AaBbCcDdEe 123..)** indicates NRCS National Standards.
This type of font (AaBbCcDdEe 123..) indicates Montana Supplement.

Additional criteria where herbicides or biosolids are a concern.

Application setback distances for biosolids, pesticides, and fertilizers must follow local, state, and federal rules and regulations (See FOTG, Section IV, Practice Standards, 590–Nutrient Management; 595–Pest Management; 633–Waste Utilization). Label requirements must be adhered to.

Additional criteria where wildlife is a concern.

Wider borders are, for most species, better for wildlife as habitat due to predation problems. Where wildlife habitat is an objective, follow the FOTG, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 645–Wildlife Upland Habitat, for species selection and management.

CONSIDERATIONS

Field borders should be designed as part of a resource management system to address a defined resource concern.

Field borders can be the "picture frame" for a combination of conservation practices. They provide a readily distinguishable buffer or safety zone around the edge of the field.

Point rows and end row planting can be eliminated if field borders are used in conjunction with cross-slope farming patterns, terraces, strip-cropping, and grassed waterway systems.

Field borders can provide forage production and improve farm aesthetics.

Field borders are most effective when used in conjunction with other agronomic or structural practices to provide conservation benefits.

Wildlife habitat objectives can be partly addressed with field borders. Consider using adapted native species that can provide food and cover for important wildlife. Increase width, if needed, to provide more protection against predators.

Delay mowing of grassed area until after the primary nesting period for ground-nesting birds.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for the establishment of field borders shall be prepared for each site or management unit according to the Criteria, Considerations, and Operations and Maintenance described in this standard, and shall be recorded on specification sheets, job sheets, including narrative statements in the conservation plan.

A field border establishment plan shall include the following information:

1. **Location map—field numbers and a map or sketch of the area to be established.**
2. **Measured acres.**
3. **Date practice scheduled and applied.**
4. **Seedbed preparation used.**
5. **Seeding method and depth of seeding.**
6. **Companion crop (if used) and rate.**
7. **Mixture and seeding rate (PLS), including selected cultivars.**
8. **Protection provided during establishment period.**
9. **Fertilization amounts and timing, if applicable.**
10. **Maintenance requirements**
11. **Other useful comments.**
12. **Date and signature of producer & NRCS.**

The Montana Field Border Specification is applicable to this practice and is required.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Inspect and repair field borders as necessary when damaged by storm events. Remove excess sediment, reseed disturbed areas, and fertilize as necessary. Fertilize according to FOTG, Section IV, Practice Standard 590–Nutrient Management.

Mow vegetation during noncritical periods for wildlife to encourage dense vegetative growth. Excess vegetation should be removed by baling or raking. Borders may be grazed but caution needs to be exercised not to overgraze vegetation reducing effectiveness.

REFERENCES

USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service, Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 512–Pasture and Hayland Planting, March 1999.

USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service, Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 645–Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, December 1984.

USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service, Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 590–Nutrient Management, February 2000.

USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service, Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Practice Standards and Specifications, 595–Pest Management,

Tips for Drilling Chaffy Grass Seed: Attention to Detail Essential, Land and Water Magazine, July/August 1997.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

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MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

PRODUCER _____ FIELD NO., TRACT, OR CTU _____

SCOPE. This specification provides guidelines for establishment and maintenance of field borders.

PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHMENT.

- ❑ Wildlife habitat
- ❑ Stabilize field boundaries, turnrows, and headlands
- ❑ Erosion control
- ❑ Reduce wind erosion
- ❑ Forage
- ❑ Other

1. Soil Map Unit(s) _____ Texture _____

Field Border Layout (FOR EXACT LOCATION SEE JOB SKETCH)	FIELD BORDER 1	FIELD BORDER 2	FIELD BORDER 3
Border width (ft)			
Border length along edge of field (ft)			
Area (ac)			
Slope (%)			
Species #1			
Species #2			
Species #3			
Species #4			
Seeding rate (Lbs/ac PLS)			
Fertilization N (lb/ac) P^2O^2 (lb/ac) K^2O (lb/ac)			

SITE PREPARATION

Prepare firm seedbed. Apply fertilizer according to recommendations.

PLANTING METHODS

Drill grass/legume seed no more than 3/8 inch deep uniformly over area. Establish stand of vegetation according to recommended seeding rate. If necessary, mulch newly seeded area with _____tons per acre of mulch material. If a companion crop is necessary apply at _____pounds per acre. Clip companion crop or harvest before it head out.

MAINTENANCE

Maintain original width and depth of the grass area. Harvest, mow, reseed, and fertilize to maintain plant density, vigorous plant growth, and to remove plant nutrients. Inspect after major storms, remove trapped sediment, and repair any eroding areas. Shut off pesticide sprayers when turning on a field border.

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If needed, an aerial view of the field illustrating strip widths, prevailing wind direction, and field layout can be shown below. Other relevant information, such as adjacent field or tract conditions including structures and crop types, the positioning of multiple or single row sets across a field or tract, and complementary practices and additional specifications may be included.

Scale 1" = _____ ft. (NA indicates sketch is not to scale)

Additional Specifications and Notes: